



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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President Nez and Vice President Lizer speak in support of local road improvements at the 2021 Road Summit



PHOTO: Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer during the 2021 Road Summit on November 16, 2021, at Navajo Fire Rock Casino in Church Rock, N.M.

CHURCH ROCK, N.M. – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer participated in the 2021 Road Summit, which focused on the Navajo Nation right-of-way process for road improvements at Navajo Fire Rock Casino in Church Rock, N.M. The summit was hosted by 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie for local chapter governments located within McKinley County.

A right-of-way is a right or privilege granted by the Resources and Development Committee of the Navajo Nation Council to access a defined area of trust lands for a prescribed purpose and time. A right-of-way can be issued for roads, pipelines, telecommunications, or electrical.

“On behalf of the Nez-Lizer Administration, we appreciate Delegate Yazzie for hosting the road summit for Church Rock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, and Thoreau Chapters. It is

important for local leaders, community members, and stakeholders to learn the rights-of-way process and establish partnerships for road improvements. With the American Rescue Plan Act, we are looking to allocate more funding for road projects. It is great to see today that many of our local governments are getting prepared for more infrastructure projects in the future,” said President Nez, who joined the summit virtually.

During his address, President Nez also noted that the Navajo Nation consists of 14,700 miles of roads, including 5,000 or tribal routes, 6,200 miles of Bureau of Indian Affairs roads, and 180 bridges. Currently, the Nation receives over \$62 million per year for road improvements, \$55 million from the Tribal Transportation Program, and seven million from the Nation’s Fuel Excise Tax.

Additionally, the BIA receives eight million for road maintenance. Collectively, \$70 million is not enough to cover our Nation’s transportation infrastructure needs. Realistically, the Navajo Nation needs approximately \$2.5 billion to provide minimal coverage on the Nation’s priority roads and bridges, President added.

“Roads are the primary building block of our communities, and with many funding opportunities coming from the federal, state, and tribal government, our communities have to be ready for infrastructure projects. Many of our chapters need assistance understanding the right-of-way process and establishing partnerships to accomplish the lengthy road improvement process. We have to support our local chapters to get as many road improvements considered and funded, so our students, elders, and individuals with disabilities can have access to resources and services,” said Delegate Yazzie.



PHOTO: 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie during the 2021 Road Summit on November 16, 2021, at Navajo Fire Rock Casino in Church Rock, N.M.

Vice President Lizer was also in attendance and spoke about the need to improve the lengthy right-of-way and the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmental Compliance process to complete road projects in a timely manner.

“The current right-of-way and environmental compliance processes are very lengthy. Occasionally, new construction of a road project takes months to years to process through our existing system. Lengthy processes result in spending a high amount of funds for right-of-way and compliances. Ideally, these funds should be spent on actual construction purposes. Today, we

highlight the importance of collaboration and communication to limit these challenges. We must assist one another to identify areas of improvement and begin working on solutions,” said Vice President Lizer.

The summit also included presentations from Navajo Division of Transportation Executive Director Garrett Silversmith, McKinley County Right-of-Way Coordinator Julie Alonzo, Bureau of Indian Affairs officials, New Mexico Department of Transportation Traffic Engineer Jason Grover, and Navajo Land Department Director Mike Halona. The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President thanks the local chapters and partners who supported the 2021 Roads Summit.

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